Revelation or Realization

The Conflict in Theosophy

Lecture delivered to the London Federation of the Theosophical Society on June 15th, to the Dutch Convention on June 21st and to the Geneva Congress of the European Federation on June 30th, 1930

by

J. J. van der Leeuw, LL.D.

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J. J. VAN DER LEEUW, LL.D.

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REVELATION OR REALIZATION

THE CONFLICT IN THEOSOPHY

There was a time when no doubt seemed possible about the future of the T. S. We had been told that the Masters of the Wisdom had founded it and that it was to be the keystone of the religions of the future. Consequently the possibility of its failure hardly occurred to members; empires might crumble, churches might cease to be, but the Theosophical Society would continue throughout the ages.

Of late, however, very serious doubts have arisen in the minds of many concerning this future. The world at large is no longer as interested in theosophy or the theosophical movement as it was forty years ago. Then the Society was opposed as a dangerous pioneer movement, now it is regarded with indifference and looked upon as a relic of the past rather than a promise of the future. In almost every Section there is a serious falling off of book sales showing that the literature which once appealed to the public, is no longer desired.

More serious even than the indifference of the modern world with regard to the movement is the conflict within it. I am not speaking about a conflict between personalities; these do not matter. The conflict is one between different standpoints, views

of life. I would define these as the conflict between *revelation* and *realization.* This conflict has been inherent in the theosophical movement from its inception, and has become acute since 1925. It was then that on the one hand revelation became fantastic and thereby questionable and on the other hand realization was emphasized by Krishnamurti as the way of life.

A system of revelation is only possible when there is one oracle, or channel of revelation, the authority of which is not to be questioned. A plurality of oracles is death to revelation. When in 1925 it was announced that the World Teacher would have twelve apostles as before in Palestine and when Krishnamurti himself denied having any apostles or disciples at all it was inevitable that members should begin to ask whether this revelation as well as previous ones was to be trusted or not. Previously the ceremonial movements had gained their adherents largely because they were announced as a preparation of the work of the coming teacher. In his name and on his authority were they launched forth and those who took part in them felt they were doing the teacher's work. When he began his teaching and denied the value of ceremonial, calling it an obstacle to liberation, there were again many who asked themselves how this contradiction could be explained. Many and ingenious were the ex-

planations put forward, but the fact remained that the faith in revelation had been shaken forever. The consequence of this has been that the work and self-sacrifice of members in so far as these were based on such faith in revelations, has fallen off considerably. In the hearts of many doubt and despair have taken the place of unquestioning belief. The inevitable result is a process of disintegration, in which many of the most serious members leave a movement in which they no longer have confidence.

It is my intention in this lecture to seek out the causes of this disintegration and, if possible, to find a cure. I shall therefore criticize quite frankly. Now criticism has always been exceedingly unpopular in the Theosophical Society. In theory our platform is free, but in practice one who thinks differently from the rest, though perfectly free to do so, will find no platform to express his thoughts. There has always been fear of any idea that might disturb the harmony among the members. Criticism, however kindly expressed, was immediately branded as "cruel and unjust attacks", as „unbrotherly" and in the last resort as being under the influence of the Dark Powers. It is the mediaeval attitude of mind where the sulphur smell of satanic activity is detected whenever an opinion is expressed different from its own.

I speak for love of truth, not to attack theosophy. The one thing I should like to ask you is to credit me at least with the sincere desire of helping our members in the present state of confusion and not to suspect me of sinister intentions. I feel like a doctor at a patient's bed-side; he must look for the organs that are diseased and can only help the patient by seeking out every cause of ill-health. When a doctor says that the patient's heart is diseased we do not call him unbrotherly or say that he is attacking the patient most cruelly; we do not tell him that he should look only for the good in the patient and not for the evil, and that he should rather emphasize the sound state of the lungs than the diseased condition of the heart. I have to speak of the unhealthy symptoms in the theosophical movement and it is only by a thorough criticism that we can hope to analyze them.

In criticizing theosophy we must first of all ask: which theosophy? Historically the word means the experience of the divine, in distinction to theology which is discussion about God. This experience of the ultimate, of reality, of life, of truth, is beyond all discussion. It exists wherever a man has it and cannot be criticized or denied. Secondly, the word has been used in an early theosophical manifesto as "the archaic system of esoteric wisdom in the keeping of the brotherhood of adepts."

I shall refer to this conception later on, but at present I am not dealing with it. Thirdly, theosophy is taken to mean the system of doctrines put forward in literature or lectures since the beginning of the Theosophical Society. This is what the world at large knows as theosophy. Finally, there is the practice in important centres of theosophical work, where, in the work actually done and in the aims held before people, we can see what is looked upon as valuable. At the moment I am speaking only about these last two forms of theosophy, that is to say, about that which has been presented to the world in books or lectures or can be seen in centres of theosophical work.

This theosophy was born in the Victorian Era. The end of the nineteenth century was a period divorced from life. Man had lost the sense of vital relations and had made objective absolutes out of things which have meaning only as living relations. Thus he looked upon the world surrounding him as an objective universe standing opposite him, independent of his consciousness. Actually what we call the world surrounding us is the way in which we interpret the reality that affects our consciousness. This interpretation in terms of our consciousness is our world-image which is real only with relation to the consciousness of

which it forms part. As long as this relation is recognized all is well; life or reality affects man and through him is externalized as a world-image in his consciousness. Man is the focus through which this process takes place, and there is an unimpeded flow of life, reality affecting him and, through him, becoming world-image. When however, man forgets that he is only a focus of reality and feels himself as a separate being, a soul or a spirit, all changes. Instead of recognizing that what he calls the world is his interpretation, in terms of consciousness, of the reality that affects him, he objectivates that world-image and makes it into an absolute, opposite him: the world of matter. In a similar way he separates himself from that life which creates the world-image in him, he objectivates that too and calls it God or Spirit. Thus he finds himself isolated between two worlds: a world of gross matter outside and a world of subtle spirit within. This duality henceforth rules his life and in practice he has to choose between its two elements. This choice is one between materialism and idealism.

In the 19th century this antithesis was a very real one, and theosophy, based on that dualism, identified itself with the idealistic world-view as against the materialistic. It fought the materialism of its day and was frankly idealistic or spiritual in

its philosophy. It still is; in theosophical doctrine the spiritual world is looked upon as the real world in which man, the higher Self has his true home. From that world he descends into these lower worlds of matter where through his "lower bodies" he gathers experience. When, through this experience his Self has become perfected, it returns to that world beyond, whence it came. Thus theosophy is a philosophy of the Beyond; its ultimate reality is not this physical world but a world removed from it by several stages, its fulfilment is not in the present but at a future time when perfection shall be reached. Thus, in space and time, it is a philosophy of the Beyond.

The world has changed considerably since the 19th century. The greatest change has been that it has rediscovered life and thereby re-established the vital relations which were lost in a period of dualism. Thus modern man no longer recognizes a duality of spirit and matter or, in scientific terms, force and mass, but sees these two as convertible quantities which appear as one or the other according to the position of the observer. A new outlook on life has been born which is neither idealistic nor materialistic, still less a compromise between the two. We can define it as *a new realism* in the light of which idealism appears as outworn as materialism. Its reality is not a world or worlds

beyond, but the *meaning* of this world as of any other world, man being as near to reality in the physical world as in any other world in which he might live. Similarly the fulfilment of life is not seen as a far off apotheosis of ultimate perfection but in the realization of life *here and now.* Man himself is the open door to reality, he is the focus through which reality becomes world-image and in his own actual experience of the moment he can therefore find the open door to all life. This is no mystic state, no "merging into the absolute", if such a thing were possible; it is a process taking place in the actual common experience of the actual present moment at the actual place where man finds himself. The experience you have at this actual moment at this place is the open door to reality — nothing else. It is in the *here* and the *now* that the way of life is to be found.

The men and women of the new age have therefore no time for a dualistic philosophy which preaches an outworn idealism, they have no interest in a philosophy of the Beyond. And such, in their eyes, is theosophy. It was born in an age of dualism, it allied itself with one of its two elements, the spiritual, it seeks its reality in a world beyond and its perfection at a future date and is in that respect a relic of the past rather than a promise of the future. Unless its philosophy becomes one

of the here and the now, recognizing that reality or life can only be approached through the actual experience of the moment, and nowhere else, there is no future for it and it will cease to have other than a historical interest.

Another characteristic of the 19th century was its fear of life. Where man has disconnected himself from life he is afraid of it and seeks a shelter or refuge. He looks for a final certainty, a system which will solve all problems of life so that Life, which he dreads, shall not be able to take him unawares or upset his comfortable existence. A system of philosophy therefore which claims to solve the problems of life and to be able to explain all that happens has a very strong appeal for such a man. Theosophy was such a philosophy; it claimed to have an answer to the problems of life, to have solved its riddles. Even its enemies must acknowledge that theosophists are unequalled in explaining all that happens, however contradictory. With a true virtuosity they perform the mental acrobatics by means of which they can assert or believe one thing and yet find an explanation when the facts of life contradict it.

Here the desire for truth is not so great as the desire to make life fit in with a preconceived system. Man feels safe only when nothing that happens to

him in daily life escapes the system of rational explanation which he has built up. When something happens to him he wants to explain why it happened and what it is "good for" ultimately. Thus he fits it in into his system of thought; he has rationalized the event. When Krishnamurti began his teaching the difficulty for most theosophists was not so much that they could not understand the teaching as that they could not fit it into their system of thought. The question was not: What does he mean? but: How can this be reconciled with what we have been taught before? Life, however, can never be reconciled to preconceived thoughts, neither can it be rationalized. Life is not an intelligence, therefore it is neither rational nor logical; it has no cause and no purpose. The attempt to rationalize the suffering that comes to us in life, to show that we have deserved it, and that it is "good for something" ultimately, is therefore doomed to failure; we cannot tame life in this way.

It is curious to see how man dreads the thought of life being beyond explanation. He wants consolation, a drug which will dull his suffering or a soothing sleeping draught which will give him an illusion of bliss. The theosophist had such consolation and such soporifics. No suffering could come to him, but he would soothe his outraged

humanity by a rationalizing process in which he proved to himself that the suffering *had* to come to him, and that it would be good for him. These attempts at explanations, however, blind man to the true meaning of things that happen to him; they tempt his attention away from the event itself, which again is the here and the now, and lead it to some imaginary cause or result. Thus the meaning of the event which lies in the actual experience, escapes him and he is no richer, no wiser for his suffering.

In a similar way, theosophy claims to have an explanation of the great problems of life: why the world was created and how, what happens after death, why man lives and what he will become. Here again, the process of rationalizing leads the attention away from the mystery of life which can only be experienced in the present. Life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be experienced. It is the consummate ease with which theosophy explained all problems and all events that has ever made true artists and thinkers fight shy of it. They know too well that life cannot be contained in any system, and that the purpose of thought is not to explain life but to understand it, by experience.

A system of thought always brings about a state of mental certainty and repose in which there

remains only one fear, that of being disturbed by doubt. That is why there has been no place for thinkers in the Theosophical Society; a thinker is always a disturbing influence. Theosophy, by claiming to offer a system of thought that would explain life and its problems, has not only scared away thinkers and artists, but has attracted the mediocre mind that seeks intellectual comfort and not truth. This explains why the theosophical movement, in the fifty years of its existence, has been so singularly lacking in creative or original thought; these were excluded automatically.

Once again, the great change that has taken place in the world has passed by the Theosophical Society completely. Modern man has rediscovered life and has consequently lost faith and interest in any systems of thought claiming to explain life or solve its riddles. He knows but too well that life can only be understood by the realisation that comes through experience, not by any solutions or doctrines. Our modern age has emerged beyond that narrow conscious life which previously was all that man recognized in his speculations. He is now aware of the unconscious without which the conscious remains unintelligible. He knows that life, not being consciousness, is irrational and neither logical nor just. It is therefore in vain to look for ethical explanations of its happenings or moral

results of the sufferings it inflicts on us. These can neither explain nor justify the events that take place. The meaning of the event can only be approached through the actual experience of it, and all search for shelter, refuge or consolation leads man away from it. Modern man, therefore, has no interest in a system of thought, however ingenious and elaborate, that would allay his fears and offer him a false repose by its attempts at explaining life. He does not want to be protected; he does not seek the warm and drowsy comfort of the fireside, he would rather go out naked and alone into the storm of life than be safe in a shelter that excludes it. He would rather perish in that storm than live in a false security. He does not seek happiness, but life itself, reality. Therefore, a philosophy which offers him the supposed security of explanations and solutions has no appeal to him, it is no longer valid. He who in these modern days claims to have solved the problems of life only succeeds in compromising himself.

If there is to be any future for the Theosophical Society, it will have to renounce utterly its claim of having solved the riddles of life and being a repository of truth; instead it will have to unite those who search for truth and for reality whatever these may bring by way of suffering and discomfort. The seeker after truth welcomes

disturbance and doubt, the very things which were and are feared most by theosophists.

In yet another respect does the Theosophical Society breathe the atmosphere of last century. It is in the desire to unite in one brotherhood all who think or feel alike. Thus the theosophical Society aimed at forming a nucleus of brotherhood. Such a nucleus however always defeats its own ends. It cannot escape becoming a brotherhood with the exclusion of less desirable brethren. The moment we unite a number of people in such a nucleus we have created a sect, a separate group walled off from the rest of the world and thereby from life.

We show the truth of this each time we speak, as we so often do, of the "outside world". The words imply that we ourselves are inside something. Inside what? Inside something that keeps that "outside world" outside that same something! Inside a barrier which we have erected around us and by means of which we have shut out those who think differently. That barrier of elaborate beliefs and doctrines has so efficiently shut out the dreaded "outside world" that no fresh air from that world has succeeded in penetrating its inner fastnesses, and the Society has breathed for fifty years nothing but the atmosphere of its own thoughts and beliefs. At its meetings it was always theosophists who told

other theosophists about the theosophical doctrines which they all knew already. The one thing that was prevented unanimously was the introduction of foreign ideas which might challenge or doubt the established doctrines. This exclusion of the outside world has been most manifest in the lodge life. It was in the snug and stuffy intimacy of lodge life that theosophical orthodoxy could breed; there, in a small circle of mediocre minds, all thinking and believing alike, a warm brotherliness could arise, uniting all in the delightful certainty of possessing the esoteric truth while the outside world lived on in darkness.

On my last lecture tour I visited a lodge, the president of which told me that his lodge was "just one happy family". This roused my misgivings, for I know what such happy families are like. Then he continued saying that a few years back there had been a member who was always questioning and challenging everything, causing disturbance at their otherwise harmonious meetings. But now that member had left their lodge, and all was harmony again. He meant, of course, that the blissful drowsiness of their intellectual slumbers which had for a while been disturbed by the one member who happened to be alive had been re-established.

It is quite true that, theoretically, our platform

is free, that we have no dogmas, and that everyone is free to criticise. But if he does, he will suffer a silent ex-communication which will effectually cold-shoulder him out of the nucleus of brotherhood. He will be made to feel that his conduct is scandalous and unbrotherly, that he is in the throes of the lower mind, that he is attacking theosophy, and laying himself open to the influence of the Dark Powers. And this attitude holds good not only among groups of ignorant members; I have found it right up to the highest authorities. Therefore, the talk about a free platform and the perfect freedom of thought does not impress me; I know that there is no such freedom, but rather an unconscious orthodoxy that has almost succeeded in killing out the critical faculty among theosophists altogether.

If the Society, in its pride, had not been so certain that it walked in the light and had been called to bring this light to a world in darkness, it might have noticed that the barriers, which it built up between itself and the outside world, prevented the light of life from coming in, so that *it* lived in darkness, while in the outside world a new and great light had arisen. That world has rediscovered the life about which theosophists talked, and consequently, it will not suffer any more barriers. Therefore truly modern men and

women will no longer become members of any Society, so long as they feel that its brotherhood is a sect and its freedom of thought an orthodoxy. The "outsider" feels that, by entering the theosophical Society, or any other spiritual movement, he subscribes to a creed which excludes him from the rest of the world, and enters a brotherhood which will make him different from all who do not belong to it.

If the Theosophical Society is to survive, if it is to attract those whom it has always endeavoured, and generally failed, to attract, it will have to change its ways entirely. Above all, the traditional lodge with its traditional meetings should be abolished. There is no more dreadful mutual burden than that of the lodge which has to meet every Tuesday night and then think of something to do. The result must be a burden or an artificial semblance of life.

Once again, if the theosophical Society is to continue, the old form of membership which implies the silent acceptance of a creed, must go, and a loose organisation take its place in which membership no more makes a man part of a sect than would, for instance, membership of the National Geographic Society. Modern man will suffer no barriers that shut life out in a supposed "outside world"; he seeks the free and unimpeded contact with life.

REVELATION OR REALIZATION

II

So far I have dealt with the causes of the decline of the Theosophical Movement in its relation to the world at large. Now we must consider the more serious causes of disintegration within the movement.

From its very beginning the Society has suffered from an internal conflict which I characterized as that between realization and revelation. In its historical meaning theosophy means realization, the experience of the Divine within man. In that sense, it was used in Neo-Platonic philosophy and by mediaeval philosophers. This conception of theosophy has been present in theosophical teaching from the beginning. Man was to find the higher self within him and thereby come into conscious unity with the Life in all things. At the same time, however, theosophy is characterised as "the archaic system of esoteric truth in the keeping of a brotherhood of adepts." Here theosophy is not a truth to be experienced by man in himself, it is a body of doctrine possessed and guarded by a group of Adepts in whose power it lay to reveal it to others. Thus the way of knowledge became one of discipleship; only by becoming a pupil of one of the Masters could man hope to partake of the esoteric truth. The aim was to gain initiation into the Brotherhood, to enter the Hierarchy that guarded the esoteric

wisdom. This way of knowledge is one of revelation; the divine Wisdom is received by the pupil from his Master and handed on again by him to those less enlightened than himself. Thus a hierarchic system of revelation arises in which the authority of superiors is not be questioned and the slightest hint is an order not to be criticised but to be obeyed. The spirit is that of a spiritual army where obedience and efficiency are greater virtues than individual creative activity and genius. The way of realisation is the way of the individual; its highest product is the creative genius. The way of revelation is the way of the group; its highest product is the perfect channel, obediently transmitting orders and power from above.

We must sharply distinguish revelation from authority. Authority is a fact in nature; where a man is superior in wisdom or power he will automatically have authority over others. That this authority can lead to abuse of power or to tyranny and impede the freedom of others does not invalidate the fact that superiority in any respect means authority.

But when I speak of revelation, I mean all information claiming to come from an *unseen source*, from an inaccessible authority. Primitive man looked upon some few as being intimately related to the gods he feared and being able to reveal their

will and power. Thus the priest was a channel through whom the will, the knowledge and the grace of the deity could be transmitted to the masses. Man sought for guidance of his own life by the revelations coming to him through the appointed oracle. The priesthood thus gained power over men's souls and were able to enforce their own will by clothing it in the garment of revelation from above. Therefore, revelation in the meaning in which I use it here, is a message from an unseen authority coming through an appointed channel.

In ordinary speech, we sometimes talk of things being "a revelation to us," but that is not the sense in which the word is used here. I can say that the Einstein theory is a revelation to me, but it will be clear that no scientific work ever partakes of the element of revelation. It does not speak in the name of an unseen authority, the scientist speaks in his own name and what he says can be questioned, criticised, proved or disproved. The authority is always available, the source of knowledge is accessible and, even though not every man has the means to prove whether the Einstein theory is true or not, he knows that Einstein's brother scientists have done their utmost to discover a flaw in it.

The bulk of our theosophical literature does not partake of the element of revelation. If a theo-

sophist writes a book describing his experiences in this or other worlds, or expounding his ideas on life and its problems, there is no revelation in such a work. The one who wrote it is available, can be questioned and criticised, the argument of the book can be discussed and contradicted; the entire subject remains within the realm of reason. Yet, even in the time of H. P. B. the element of revelation was present in the Theosophical Society. Thus, in the *Mahatma Letters* we find messages coming from an unseen authority through an appointed channel. Later on, when letters were no longer forthcoming, messages came directly through certain recognized theosophical authorities. In these messages, the Masters would express their desires as to what should be done or not done, what activities undertaken or opposed, and give hints guiding the lives of prospective pupils. Here we find real revelation: messages from an unseen authority, inaccessible to others. Theoretically, of course, the unseen authority is accessible to all who succeed in raising their consciousness to its level; practically it is not, and should any claim to have come into touch with the same authority from whom messages were previously received through another, that authority usually speaks through him with a very different voice. We only need to compare the letters from the Master K. H. produced in the time

of H. P. B. and written in her Bohemian manner interspersed with French expressions, often somewhat racy in style, with the messages revealed as coming from that same Master in recent years. They breathe an utterly different spirit; where the former denied the existence of God in any form, seen or unseen, personal or impersonal, the latter have reintroduced him in a very personal way indeed. Where in the *Mahatma Letters* the Master K. H. speaks of religion as being the greatest evil in human civilisation, and denounces all churches, priesthoods and ceremonials in definite terms, his more recent messages speak with great reverence about religion and church and endorse ceremonial and priesthood most vigorously. One is therefore inclined to think that the source of unseen authority for each is a strictly individual and subjective one, an exteriorisation of their own unconscious motives. This is still more evident with regard to all messages revealed as coming from the World Teacher during the last fifteen years.

When Krishnamurti began speaking in his own authority, and in his own name as the World Teacher, the things he said were widely different in spirit and purpose from all messages thus received. First of all, he emphatically denied being the vehicle of another consciousness or being used by anyone who spoke through him or inspired him. He

claimed to be the World Teacher ,not because some other intelligence possessed or used him, but because he had gained liberation and become one with life, which is the only Teacher. He utterly denied having any apostles or even disciples and rejected ceremonial, however and wherever used, as an obstacle on the path to liberation. Neither would he have anything to do with the occult path of discipleship and initiation, characterising all these as "unessentials". It was therefore inevitable that theosophists all over the world, should have begun to doubt all previous revelations and to suspect that these were more in the nature of subjective opinions.

It takes the mental acrobatics of trained theosophical students to reconcile the contradictory facts contained in the earlier revelations and the subsequent teaching of Krishnamurti. Even though he himself strongly denies being used by another consciousness, they claim to know better than he does what is actually taking place in his own consciousness, and still maintain that there is another person, the "real" World Teacher, living in the Himalayas, who occasionally speaks through Krishnamurti. This real World Teacher entirely endorses all previous revelations, he has apostles, and approves the ceremonial movements, especially the Liberal Catholic Church. The fact that Krishnamurti denies the value of all these is then explained by

the fact that he, being "only a vehicle", cannot express fully the "glorious consciousness" which they, the speakers, know so much more intimately than he. Thus it means nothing that he should contradict things previously revealed, it only shows that at that time, it was not the World Teacher speaking — but only Mr. Krishnamurti. The interesting situation arises that a few people are to be credited with the ability to tell us when Krishnamurti speaks and when the World Teacher is speaking. The result would seem to be that when the opinions agree with their own, it is the World Teacher speaking, while otherwise it is Mr. Krishnamurti. The only one who evidently is not to be believed, when he says the World Teacher is speaking, is Mr. Krishnamurti himself.

It is needless to expound further the length to which theosophical casuistry can go; the tragical fact remains that there appears to be less desire to understand what Krishnamurti says than to fit it in with revelations previously given. It would be far simpler to recognize the previous revelations to have been erroneous. But this, of course, would discredit the cause of revelation.

Enough, however, has been said to show how fatal the effects of revelation are in any movement. The fact that revelation is a message coming from an unseen authority, inaccessible to others, places

it beyond the realm of reason and makes it impossible to criticise or discuss its value. In all discussions, which I have ever had on the subject, the adherents of revelation would always end by saying, "Well, all I can say is that the Master told me to do this, and so I do it." This ends any discussion, and puts the question beyond reason. Thus I maintain that the evil effects of revelation are caused by the fact that revelation can only be accepted or denied, but never criticised in the light of reason. I know that theoretically this can be done, and whenever the subject is brought up, we are told that theosophical leaders have always urged their disciples to judge for themselves and not accept anything because they said it. This, however, is theory; in practice, one who ventured to criticise or doubt a message coming from the Master, would suffer the silent excommunication of the heretic, and be made to feel that he was unfit to be of the elect. Of what value is the freedom to criticise and to judge for oneself when, in the rare cases, where some brave soul has ventured to do so, we are told that "in incarnations to come, he will, through untold suffering, grope in vain for the light which he thus wilfully rejected"? This is but Eternal Damnation in another form. It is the threat and fear of punishment to come which terrorises the would-be critic back into an attitude

of obedient submissiveness. In the *Mahatma Letters* and the correspondence between H. P. B. and Sinnett, we can read what is said about those who do not take a hint once given, or who dare to argue about an order coming from above. Even Sinnett himself was repeatedly threatened with the breaking off of all further intercourse with his Master if he did not follow the orders given. And there is no doubt that, if a theosophist at any time criticises or rejects a message coming to him from the Master through an appointed channel, he will thereby be said to have cut himself off for a long time to come from any further such privileges. Where simultaneously discipleship and a drawing nearer to the Master are held up as the goal of life, it is clear that the theoretical freedom of criticism means the giving up of all that is held dearest and highest in the life of theosophists.

I wish to make it perfectly clear that I am in no wise denying the existence of the Masters or the possibility of communion with them. If I think that the Master has spoken to me, this fact implies no revelation, but only experience: I have an experience which may or may not be of value to me. Revelation only begins when I transmit to others the messages thus received *as coming from that unseen authority.* I should like to suggest that anyone who thinks he or she has received a message

or order from a Master or higher authority should first see whether he himself agrees with it, whether it awakens a response in his own soul. If so, let him, when speaking about it to others, speak in his own name and say, "I think this, and I will this". But never let him say, "The Master thinks this or the Master wills this". Should he himself not agree with the communication thus received, let him say nothing at all. But let him never speak in the name of an unseen authority.

Revelation is still more fatal when it interferes with the life of the individual and attempts to guide his life, to tell him what to do or where he stands. It has been the custom in theosophical centres to look to a few as being able to tell others where they stand in their spiritual evolution, whether they have taken a step forward or not. Thus spiritual progress is made to depend on revelation, and power is given to a few to tell others where they stand. The consequences of this are always fatal. The absurdity of the situation becomes clear when we consider that if these few people, supposed to be able to tell us where we stand, were to die, we should be lost in uncertainty. Again, if the appointed channels should disagree, as has happened before, we have to choose whom we are going to believe and whom not! It is inevitable that where such power in placed in the hands

of the few, their own personal likes and dislikes will unconsciously influence the occult standing they confer on others. These, on the other hand, may be afraid to contradict or oppose one who has the power to bestow or withhold steps, but will try to keep in good standing, and do what they are asked to do. Thus a host of spiritual iniquities are born, detrimental to the individual and to the cause he serves.

But above all, the fact remains that it is *impossible at any time* for any one to tell another where he stands in spiritual progress. No one can reveal that to you but the life that is in you. Each individual is as a ray going forth from the centre of the circle; he can only enter the centre of life along the ray that is his own being, never along another. Life expresses itself in each one of us in a way which we alone, and no one else, can know; there is a sanctuary of life in each of us where we alone can enter and hear the voice of life. We cannot enter that sanctuary by the backstairs of revelation; there is only the royal road of our own daily experience of life. No one can tell you what to do in life, what work to serve but the voice of life that is within you, your own inner vocation, your individual uniqueness. To go to another, and to ask him what you should do or where you stand, is to violate the life that is within you, and to shut yourself off from it.

I wish to emphasize that I do not deny the existence of the occult path or the steps on it such as discipleship or initiation. Their existence or non-existence lies outside the subject I am dealing with. The element of revelation only enters where any one, in the name of an unseen and inaccessible authority tells others where they stand and what steps they have taken, so that no one is supposed to have taken a step unless one of the few acknowledged channels of revelation has affirmed him to have done so.

Nothing would be lost if this practice with all its fatal consequences were discontinued. If the taking of a step means an expansion of life within, that expansion will be there and show itself whether anyone else says you have taken a step or not. What would it avail you if everyone acknowledged you as having taken a step and the expansion of life were not within you, and on the other hand, what do you lose if everyone should agree in saying you have *not* taking a step and the expansion of life is in you and shows forth in your daily life? The telling or not telling is wholly unessential and wholly mischievous in its consequences. It makes for a spiritual snobbery in which the elect sit in the seats of honour, while the common herd are despised.

Though the results of revelation are always fatal, and opposed to the spirit of theosophy, which

is realisation, it is most dangerous where it interferes with the individual lives of people and attempts to make them cease from work they are doing or undertake work they have no intention of doing. Especially where young people are concerned such interference is inexcusable. I know cases where, on the basis of revelation, young people have been taken out of their university studies in order that they might dedicate themselves to "the Work". As if the Work for each one were not that which the life within him urges him to do, instead of the revelation coming from another! In modern education, especially in the Montessori method, it is fully recognized that the way of life is the way of realization. The child is surrounded by didactic material, the only purpose of which is to draw out its faculties and to enable it to learn by experience. In this way the child will spontaneously grow into that which the life within it means it to be.

Opposed to this spirit of life is the army spirit where orders come from above and have to be obeyed without argument or delay. It is this spirit which inevitably accompanies revelation; a spiritual hierarchy is like a spiritual army where orders are obeyed and not questioned. In this army-spirit individual uniqueness and creative genius are crushed out. We cannot therefore wonder why there has been so little creative work in the

Theosophical Society; it is because the ideal of the "band of servers" has been obedience to revelation, and not self-expression through realization.

There is no reason why anyone should not occasionally seek the advice of those wiser than himself, and discuss with them his difficulties. There is no reason why we should not try to learn as much as we can from teachers and books, so long as we realize that we have to make our decisions in our own name and that it is weakness to shift the responsibility on to others. We must have no fear to guide our own lives. Better to perish in the attempt than go safely along the way of another.

There is no future for the Theosophical Society unless the evil of revelation be shaken off, never to return. It is wholly incompatible with theosophy which is essentially experience of the Divine, or realization. It is not another "path" or "aspect"; superstition is no path, but an error. There is a pseudo-tolerance which agrees with the most conflicting views, admiring them all impartially, and trying to get "some good out of each one". This tolerance is in reality a lack of backbone, an absence of vigorous life.

Let no one say that in my address I have denied occultism. There is a future for occultism if it will conform to strictly scientific methods, and

submit to tests and proof. It can only develop if it renounces entirely all spiritual or religious claims; it has as little to do with these as ordinary science. Just as science could not develop until it shook off the mystical and spiritual glamour with which it was enveloped in the Middle Ages, so the condition of progress for occultism as a science is that it should likewise discard the halo of mystery in which it is enveloped.

When the question is asked: Has the Theosophical Society a future?, I can only answer that I do not know. But what I can say with utter certainty is that it has *no* future unless it breaks free from the outworn mentality that still permeates it and is born anew in the spirit of the new age. That spirit is one of love of life instead of fear of life, one in which life is welcomed even though it may destroy the beliefs in which we found refuge hitherto.

Theosophy must cease to be a philosophy of the Beyond; it must conquer the duality in which it is still rooted and realize that the open door to reality lies in the here and the now, in man's actual daily experience and not in some higher world or some distant future. None can open this door for us and none can close it. It is no mystical experience for the few alone; it is for all and it is only

our fear of life that makes us incapable of seeing it.

Theosophy has to realise that its claim of being a philosophical system, explaining the problems of life, has no appeal to modern man who knows that life is not a problem to be solved; to whom it is a search and an ever increasing experience.

The Society must cease to be a brotherhood with the exclusion of less desirable brethren; it must break down the barriers which make it possible to speak of an "outside world", and create a new form of membership which does not involve sectarian allegiance.

Above all, theosophists must learn to recognize the conflict that has been inherent in theosophy from the beginning: that between realization and revelation. Theosophy, as the realization of life by each man in his own consciousness, is incompatible with a hierarchic system of revelation where truth and enlightenment come to us through others and where the guidance of our life rests on orders received from superiors.

Modern man no longer desires a shelter or a refuge, consolation or security. Rather than stagnate in the false repose and happiness which these can give, he will go out alone and face the storm of life in his own strength.

The aim of theosophy is to breed, not weaklings, but strong men.